



#4

(OF 6)

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# STAR WARS

## DARK EMPIRE



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# BOOK 4: CONFRONTATION ON THE SMUGGLERS' MOON

Believing he can resolve the Galactic conflict by learning the Emperor's darkest secrets, Luke Skywalker has at last taken his father's place as the Emperor's protégé and Supreme Commander of the Imperial forces.

The Emperor, for his part, hopes to push his "young apprentice" over the edge, deep into the seductive embrace of the Dark Side of the Force.

Luke's decision to follow his father's destiny is a dangerous and perhaps foolhardy one, for the Emperor has now launched a massive assault upon the crumbling New Republic.

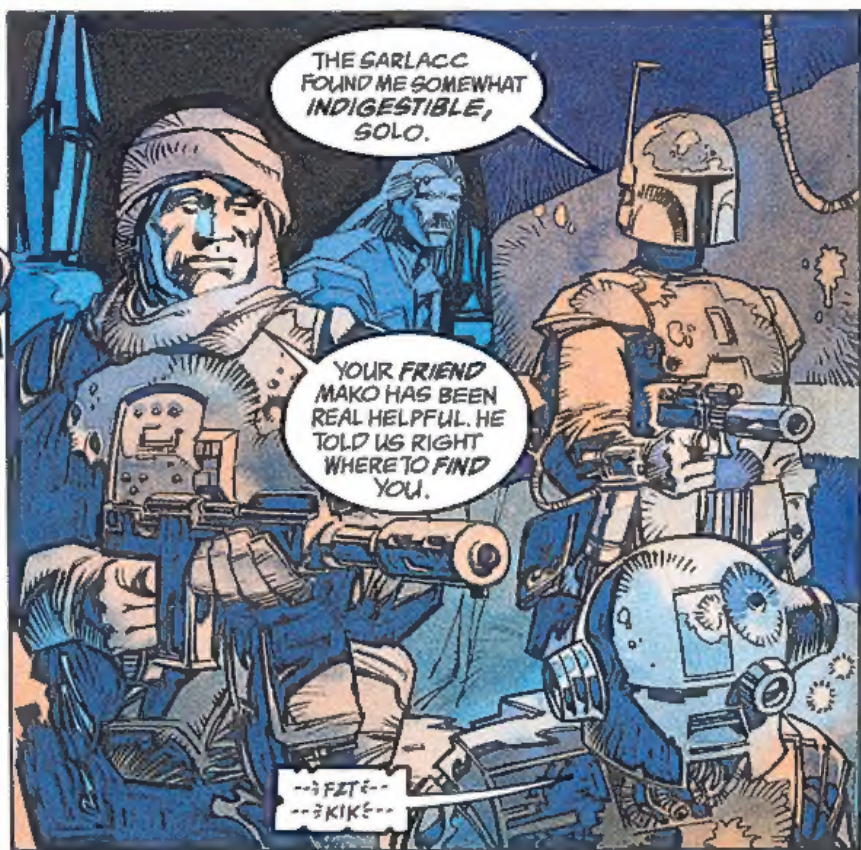
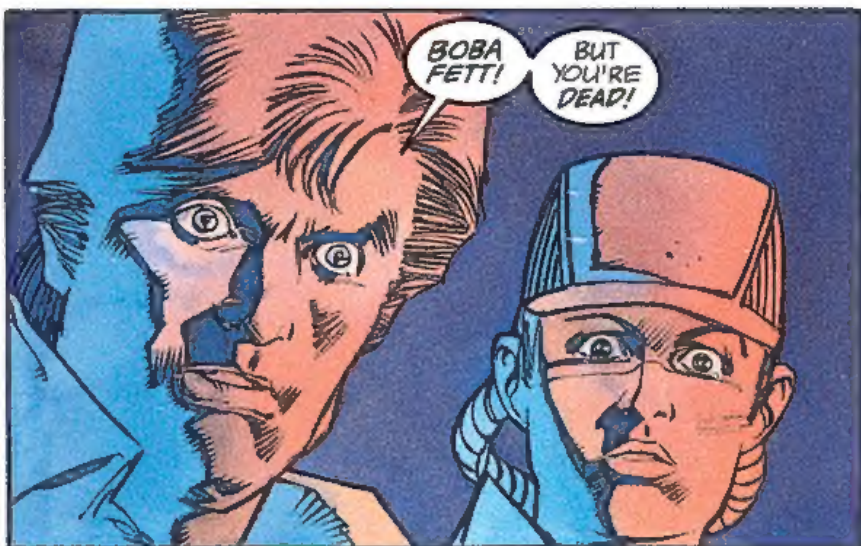
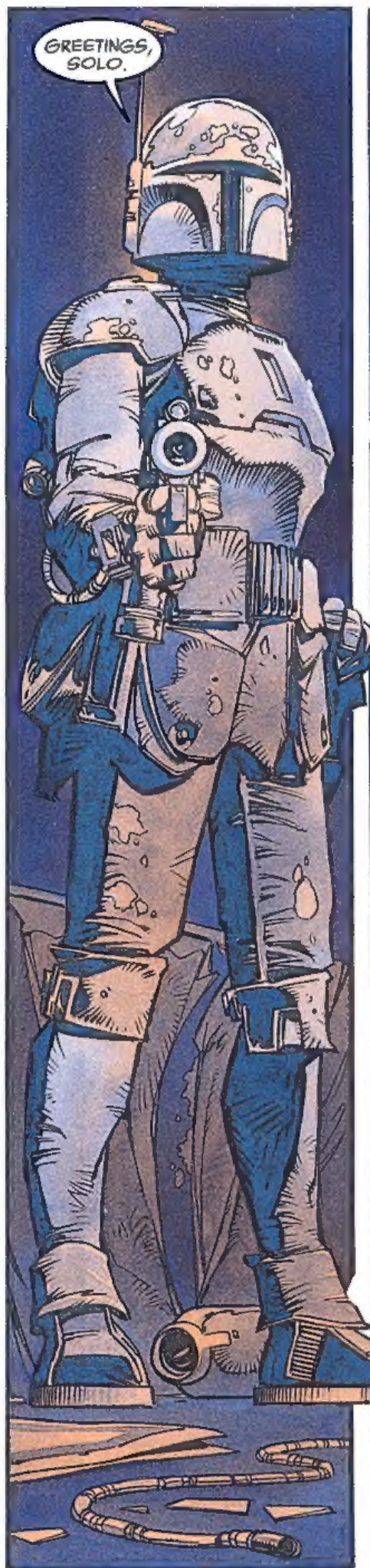
As the Emperor's inexorable *World Devastators* smash the floating cities of Admiral Ackbar's home planet, Lando Calrissian and Wedge Antilles lead Rebel forces in a fierce — and fruitless — attempt to save the gentle Mon Calamari.

Meanwhile, *Han Solo* and *Leia Organa* embark on a quest to free Luke. Together with *Chewbacca* and *C-3PO* they journey to Nar Shaddaa, a smugglers' moon orbiting the Hutt homeworld. There they find Han's old friend, *Shug Ninx*, and old girlfriend, *Salla Zend*, who owns a ship that can travel the Deep Galactic Core with impunity.

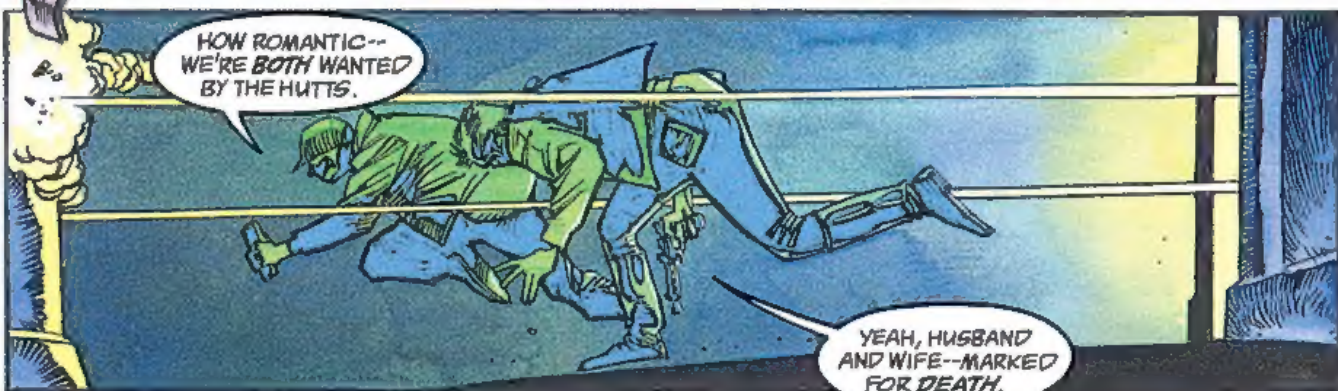
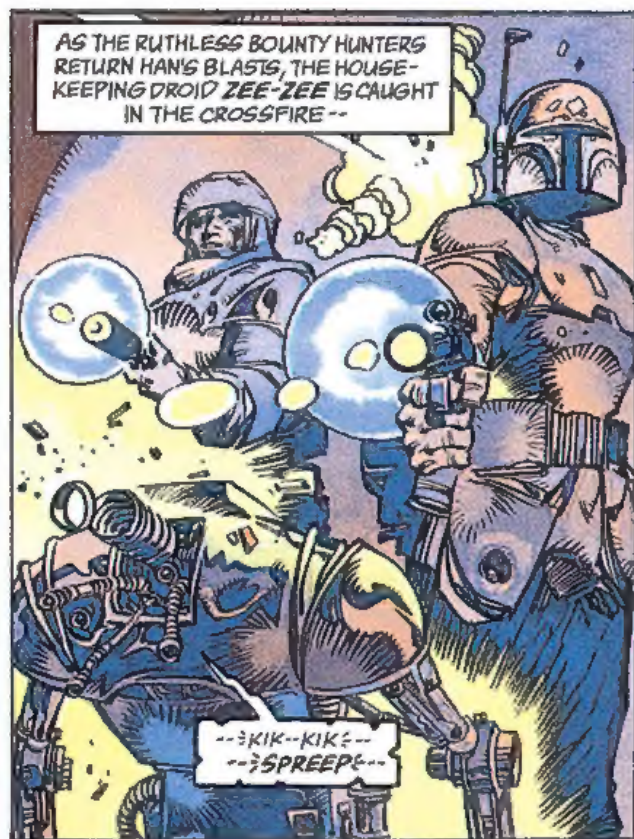
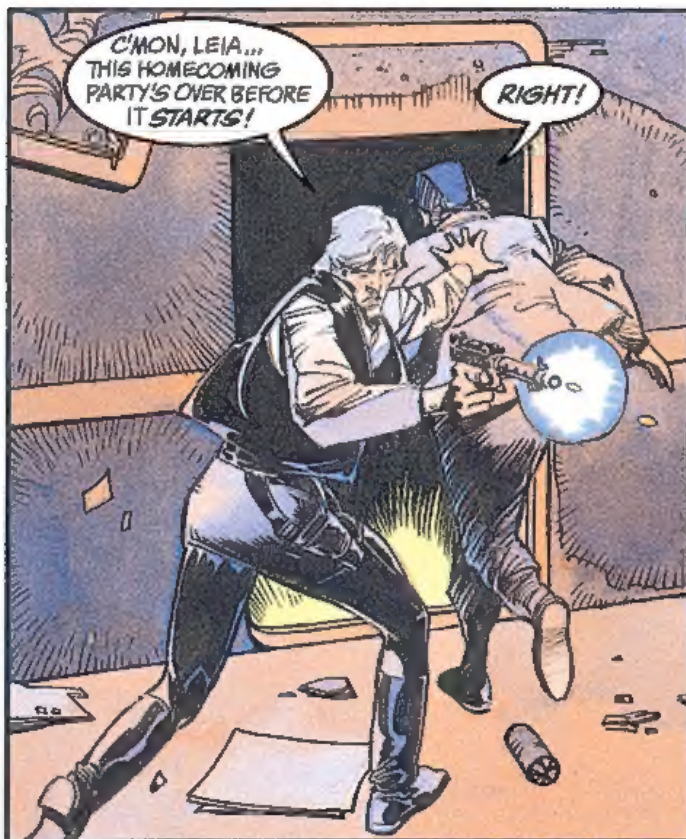
And there Leia meets *Vima-Da-Boda*, an old woman Jedi overlooked in the great purge, who gives Leia a mysterious gift.

But the highest clan of Hutts, brothers of the dead gangster Jabba, have placed a fabulous price on the heads of Han and Leia... a price that attracts the attention of an old enemy: *Boba Fett*!







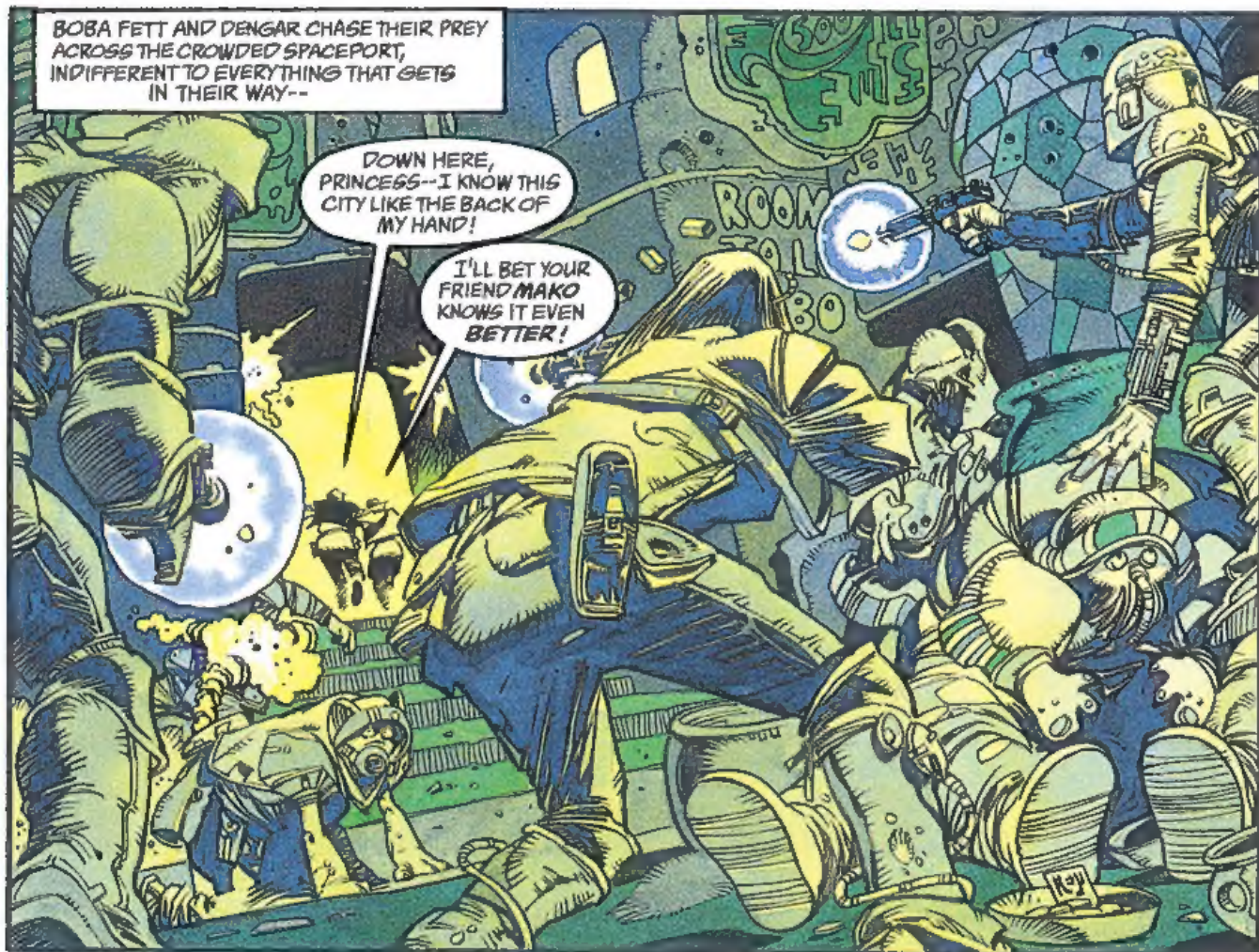




BOBA FETT AND DENGAR CHASE THEIR PREY  
ACROSS THE CROWDED SPACEPORT,  
INDIFFERENT TO EVERYTHING THAT GETS  
IN THEIR WAY--

DOWN HERE,  
PRINCESS--I KNOW THIS  
CITY LIKE THE BACK OF  
MY HAND!

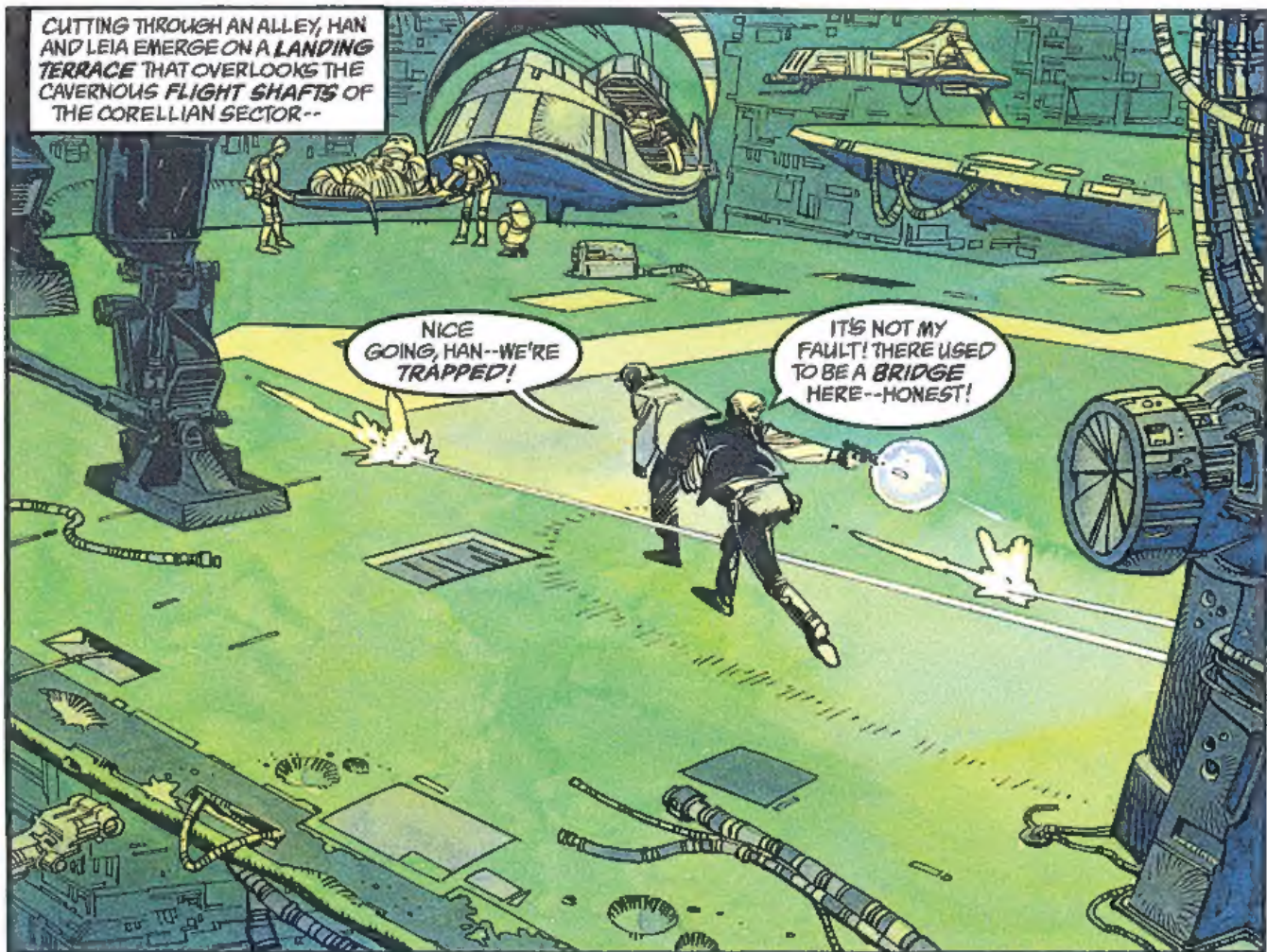
I'LL BET YOUR  
FRIEND MAKO  
KNOWS IT EVEN  
BETTER!



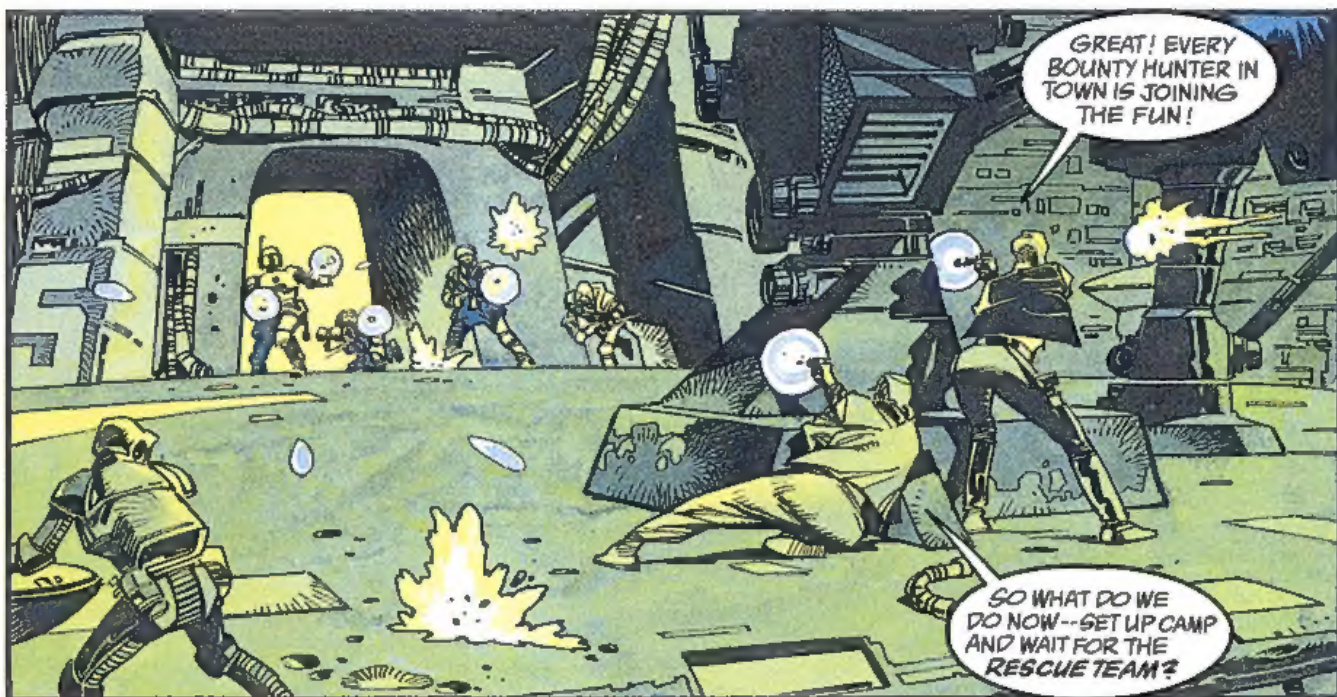
CUTTING THROUGH AN ALLEY, HAN  
AND LEIA EMERGE ON A LANDING  
TERRACE THAT OVERLOOKS THE  
CAVERNOUS FLIGHT SHAFTS OF  
THE CORELLIAN SECTOR--

NICE  
GOING, HAN--WE'RE  
TRAPPED!

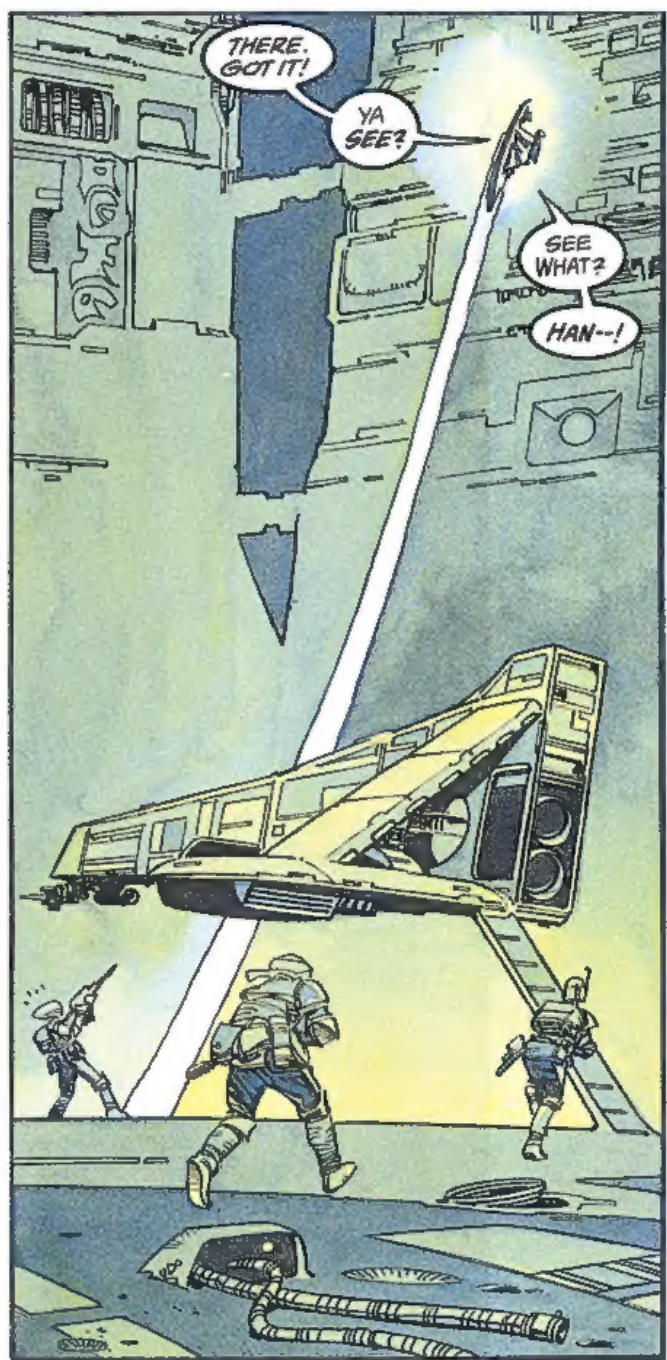
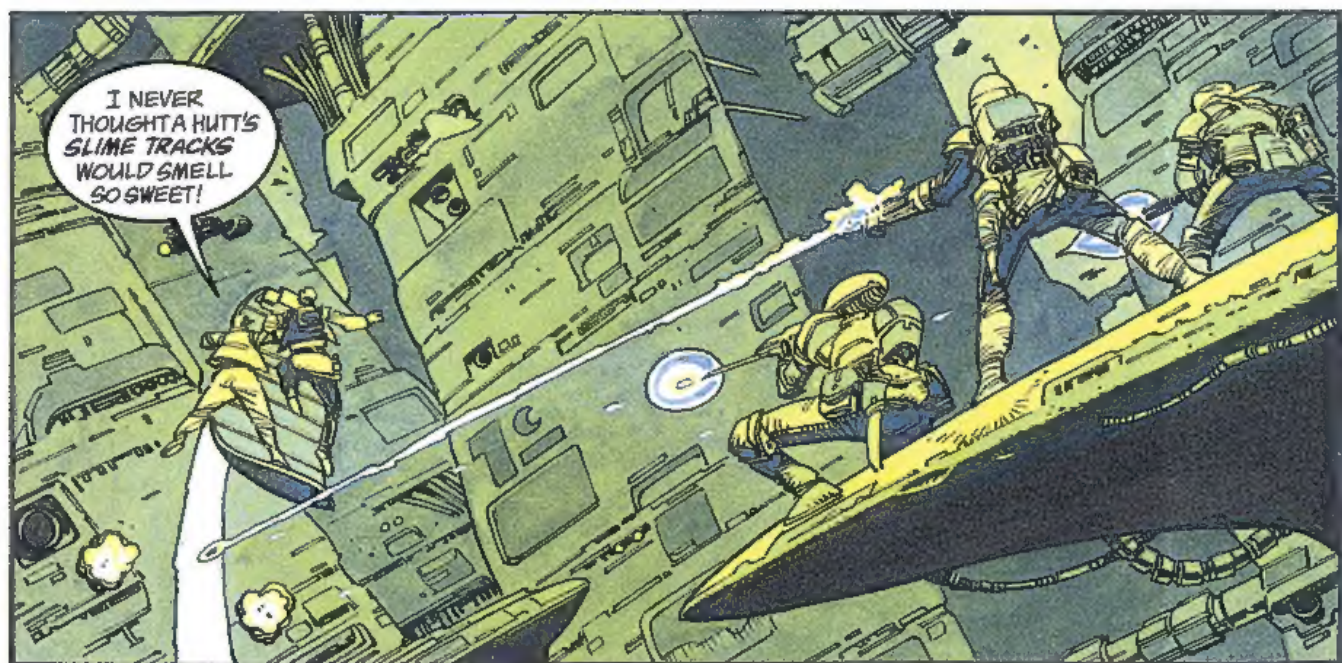
IT'S NOT MY  
FAULT! THERE USED  
TO BE A BRIDGE  
HERE--HONEST!



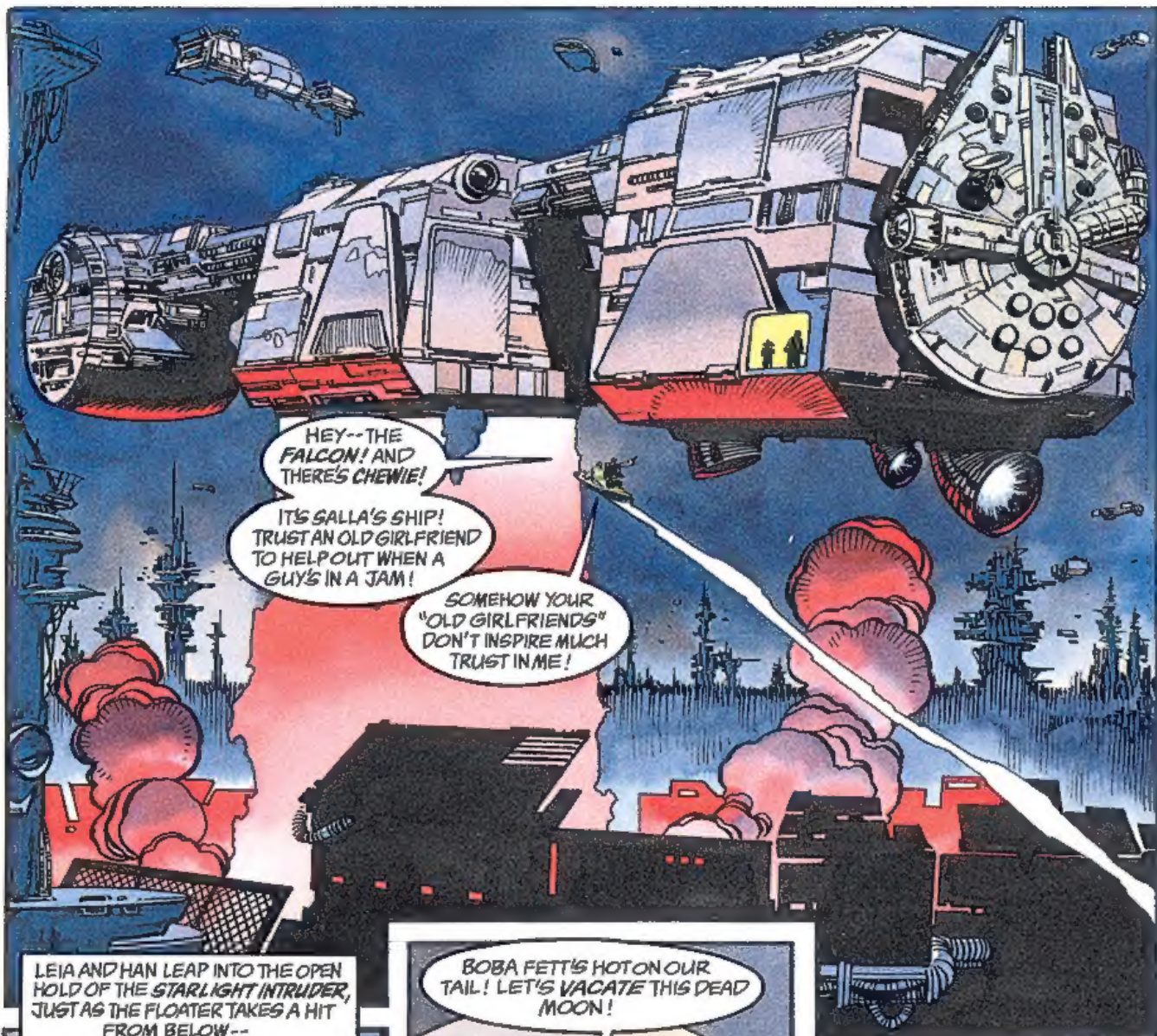












LEIA AND HAN LEAP INTO THE OPEN HOLD OF THE STARLIGHT INTRUDER, JUST AS THE FLOATER TAKES A HIT FROM BELOW--

SALLA--BEAUTIFUL! THANKS!

GNARRN!

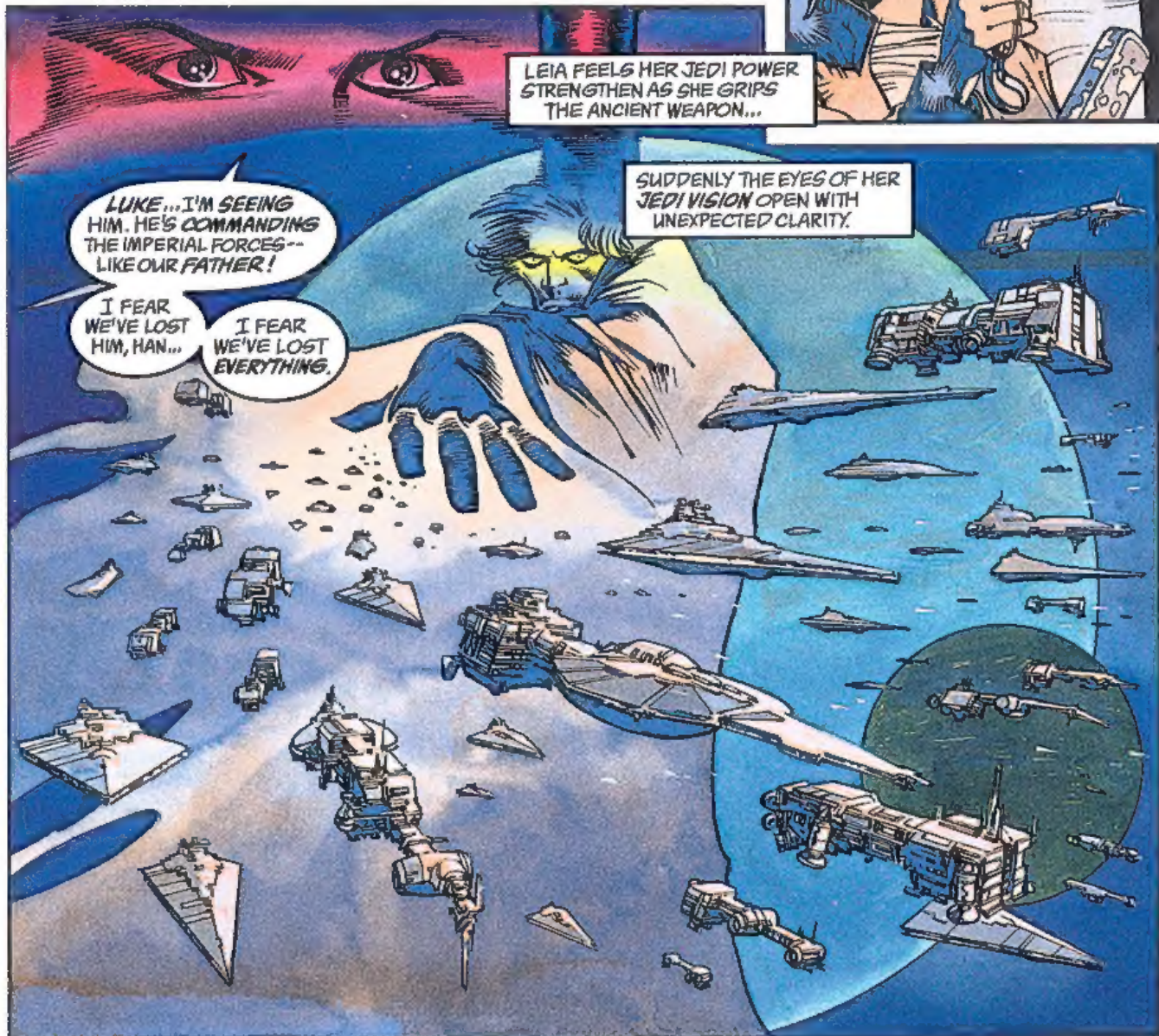
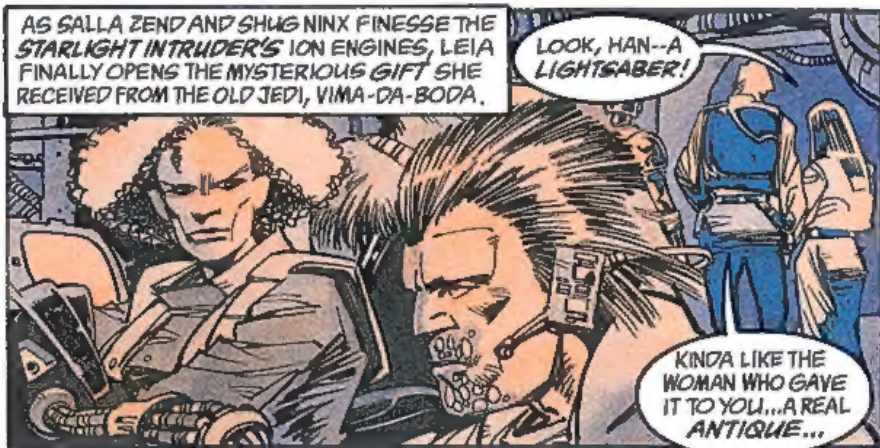
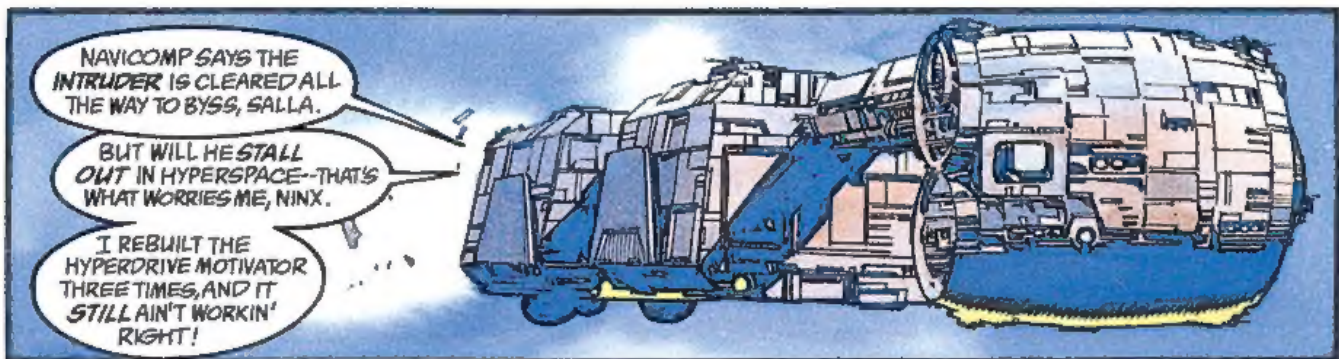
BOBA FETT'S HOT ON OUR TAIL! LET'S VACATE THIS DEAD MOON!



THEY'RE MAKIN' THE JUMP, FETT... COORDINATES ARE DEEP GALACTIC CORE.

SLAVE II'S FASTER THAN THAT JUNKER. WE'LL BE WAITIN' FOR THEM!







HIGH OVER THE GREAT  
CALAMARI WATER WORLD  
LEIA'S PREMONITIONS  
ARE PROVING TRUE--!

THE ALLIANCE STAR DESTROYER  
EMANCIPATOR IS MAKING AN  
EXPENSIVE MEAL FOR ONE OF THE  
EMPEROR'S NEW WORLD DEVASTATORS!

THIS SHIP'S  
DOOMED! JETTISON  
ALL ESCAPE PODS!

ON BOARD THE LAST ESCAPE  
POD, LANDO CALRISSIAN  
AND WEDGE ANTILLES  
SURVEY THE NEARLY  
HOPELESS SITUATION--

I GUESS I  
JUST WASN'T CUT OUT  
TO COMMAND STAR  
DESTROYERS!

HANG ON TO  
YOUR HAT, BOSS--I'M  
HEARING GOOD NEWS  
ON THE ALLIANCE  
FREQUENCY...

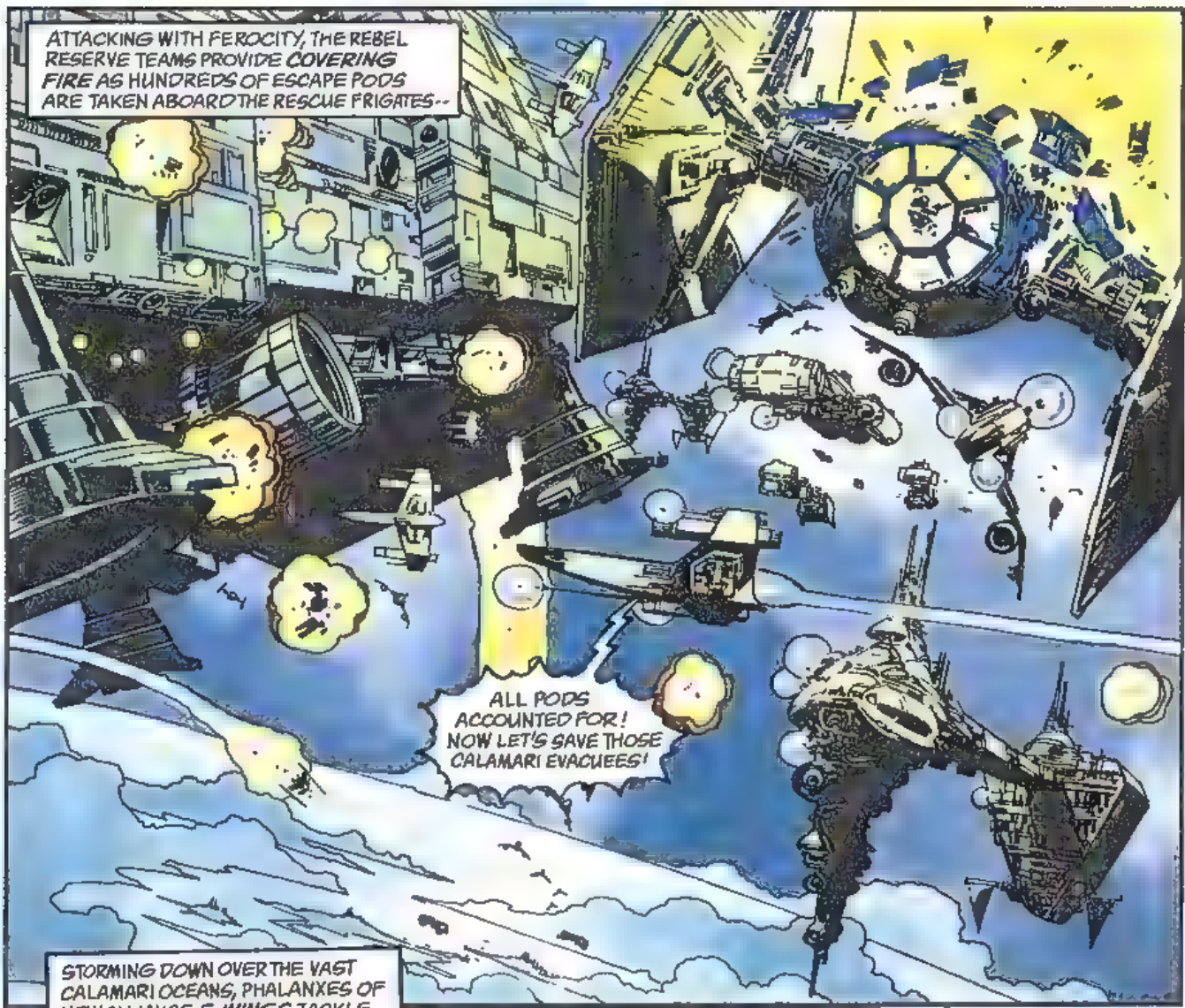
PINNACLE BASE  
IS SENDING OVER THE  
RESERVES!

WHITE TEAM  
IS THROUGH!

SUBLIGHT POWER  
ENGAGED! DEFLECTORS  
ON!

ARM ALL  
TURBOS AND ION  
CANNONS!





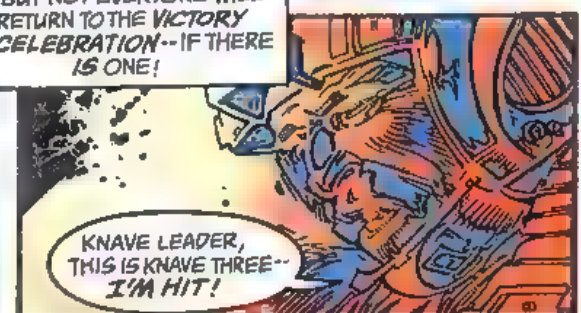
ATTACKING WITH FEROCITY, THE REBEL RESERVE TEAMS PROVIDE COVERING FIRE AS HUNDREDS OF ESCAPE PODS ARE TAKEN ABOARD THE RESCUE FRIGATES--

ALL PODS ACCOUNTED FOR!  
NOW LET'S SAVE THOSE CALAMARI EVACUEES!

STORMING DOWN OVER THE VAST CALAMARI OCEANS, PHALANXES OF NEW ALLIANCE E-WINGS TACKLE THE WORLD SMASHERS HEAD ON!

KNAVE ONE TO KNAVE TEAM-- BLAST ANYTHING THAT LOOKS LIKE A SCANNING TOWER-- THAT'S THE KEY TO VICTORY!

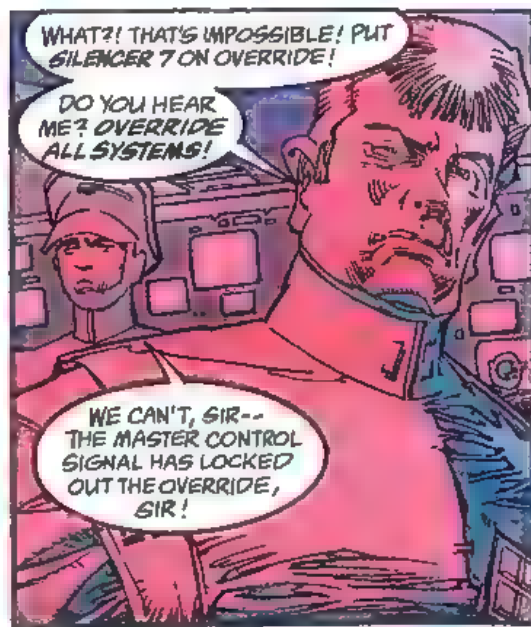
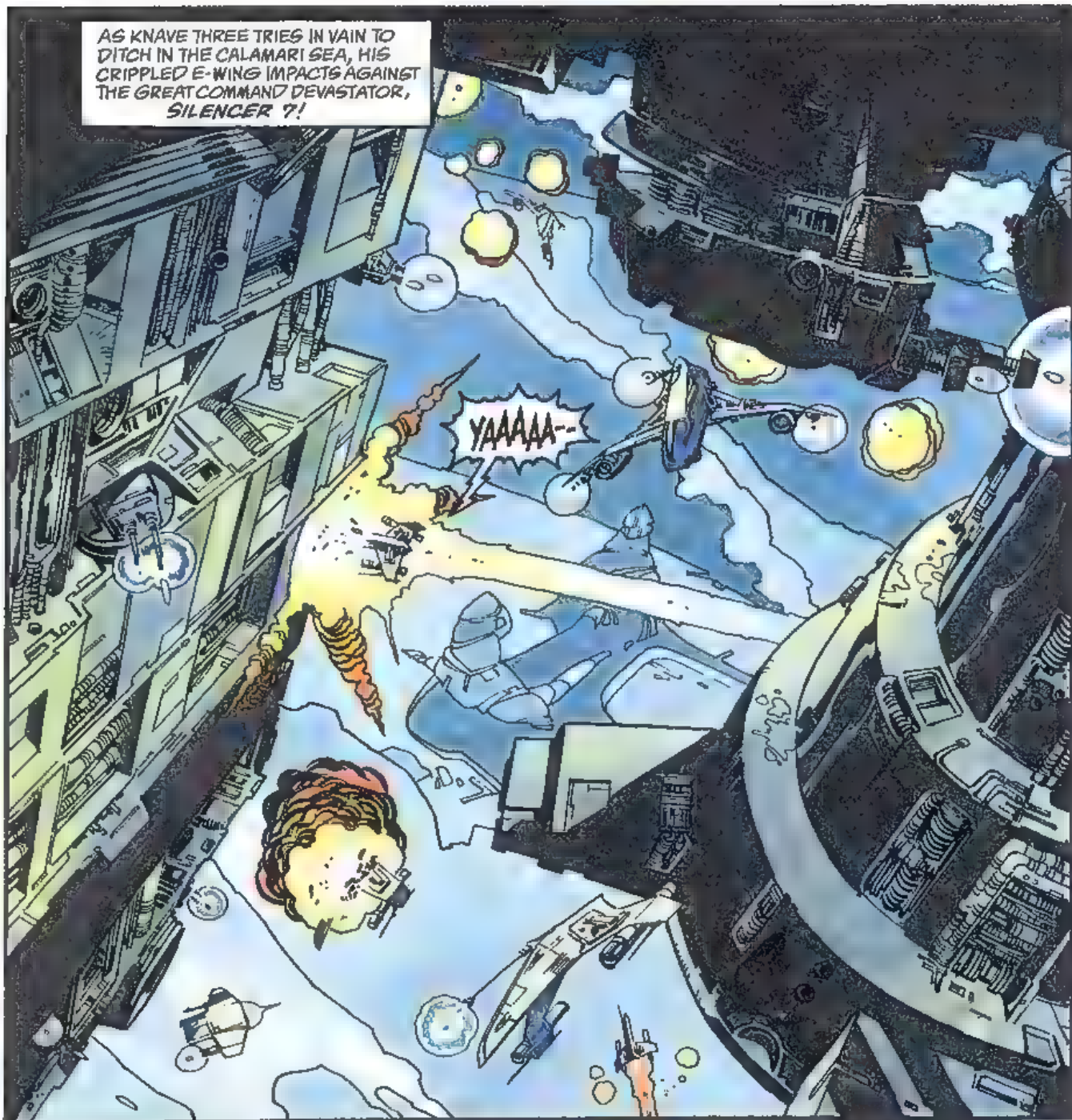
BUT NOT EVERYONE WILL RETURN TO THE VICTORY CELEBRATION-- IF THERE IS ONE!



KNAVE LEADER,  
THIS IS KNAVE THREE--  
I'M HIT!

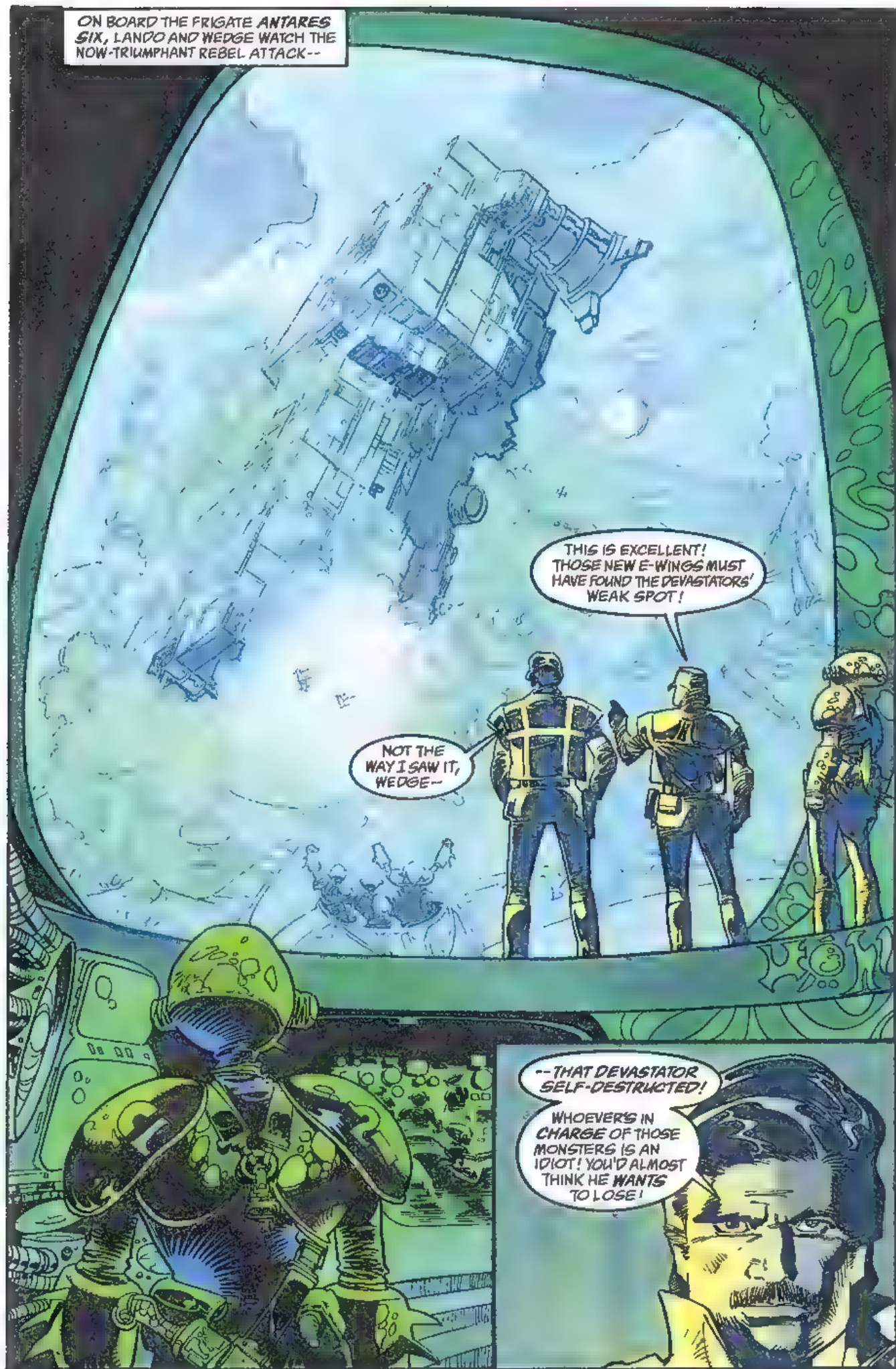


AS KNAVE THREE TRIES IN VAIN TO  
DITCH IN THE CALAMARI SEA, HIS  
CRIPPLED E-WING IMPACTS AGAINST  
THE GREAT COMMAND DEVASTATOR,  
SILENCER 7!





ON BOARD THE FRIGATE ANTARES  
SIX, LANDO AND WEDGE WATCH THE  
NOW-TRIUMPHANT REBEL ATTACK--







OKAY, HAN...  
YOU'VE GOT  
YOUR WISH--

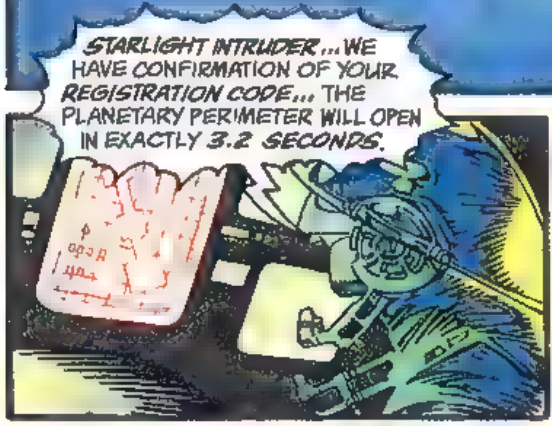
--WE'RE ENTERING  
THE DEEP-CORE SECURITY  
ZONE...

BYSS HAS ACKNOWLEDGED  
OUR APPROACH...THE WHOLE PLANET  
IS PROTECTED BY HEAVY-DUTY  
SHIELD GENERATORS.

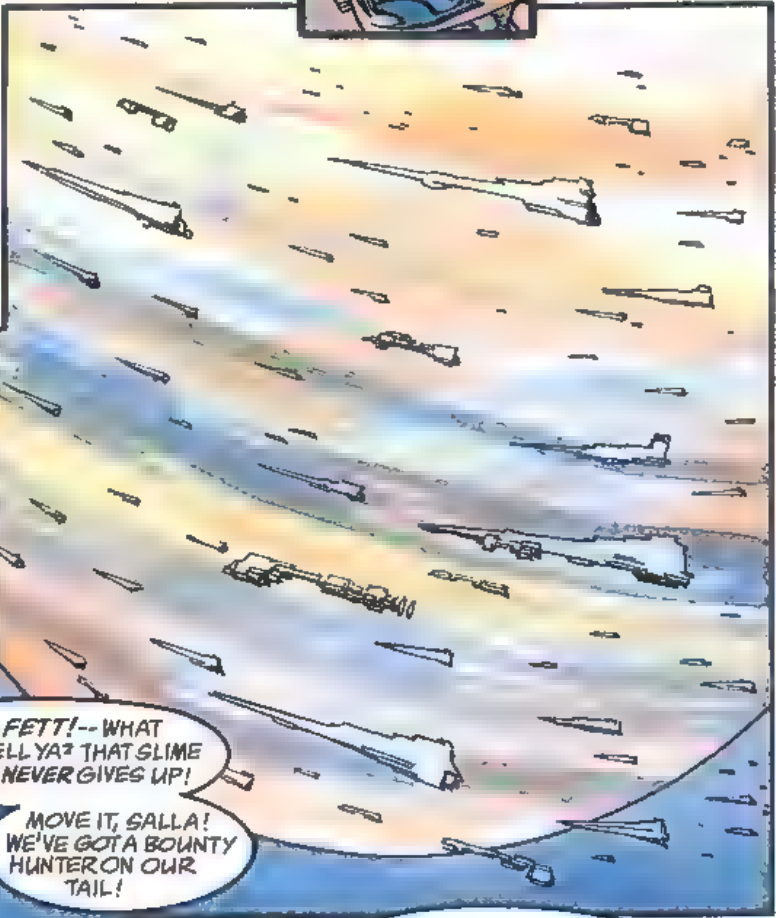
KIND OF LIKE THAT  
SYSTEM WE TOOK OUT  
ON THE ENDOR MOON!

AND YOU'RE  
CLEAR TO LAND,  
RIGHT? TAKE  
US DOWN!

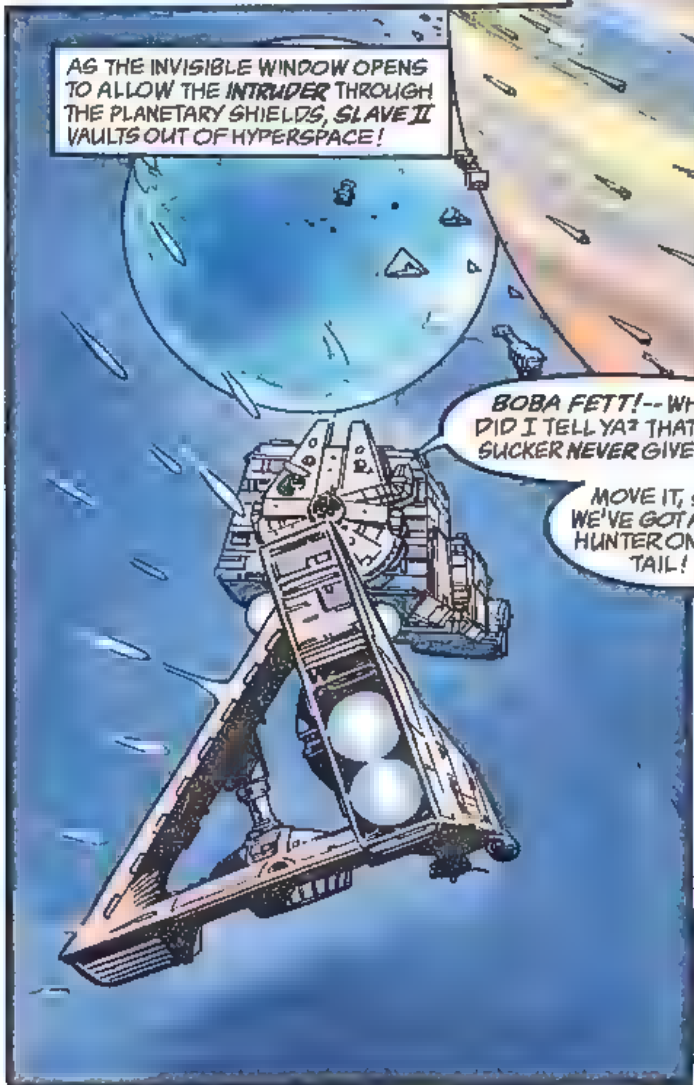
OH DEAR... I  
DO HOPE WE'RE NOT  
TOO LATE TO SAVE  
ARTOO!



STARLIGHT INTRUDER...WE  
HAVE CONFIRMATION OF YOUR  
REGISTRATION CODE... THE  
PLANETARY PERIMETER WILL OPEN  
IN EXACTLY 3.2 SECONDS.

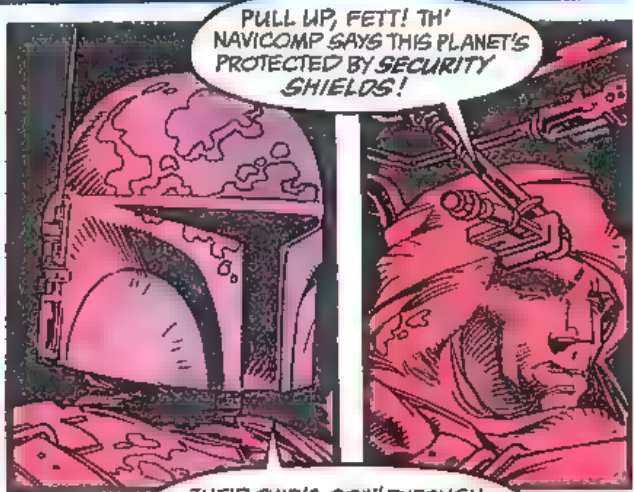


AS THE INVISIBLE WINDOW OPENS  
TO ALLOW THE INTRUDER THROUGH  
THE PLANETARY SHIELDS, SLAVE II  
VAULTS OUT OF HYPERSPACE!



BOBA FETT!-- WHAT  
DID I TELL YA? THAT SLIME  
SUCKER NEVER GIVES UP!

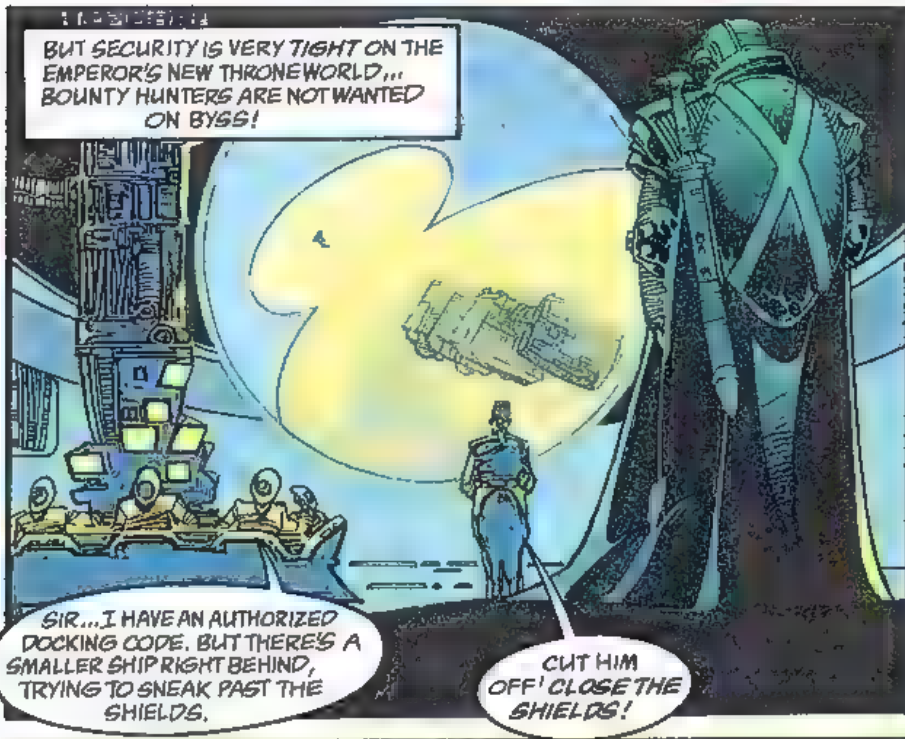
MOVE IT, SALLA!  
WE'VE GOT A BOUNTY  
HUNTER ON OUR  
TAIL!



PULL UP, FETT! TH'  
NAVICOMP SAYS THIS PLANET'S  
PROTECTED BY SECURITY  
SHIELDS!

THEIR SHIP'S GOIN' THROUGH...  
SLAVE II WILL FOLLOW THEM IN--  
BEFORE THE SHIELDS CAN CLOSE!

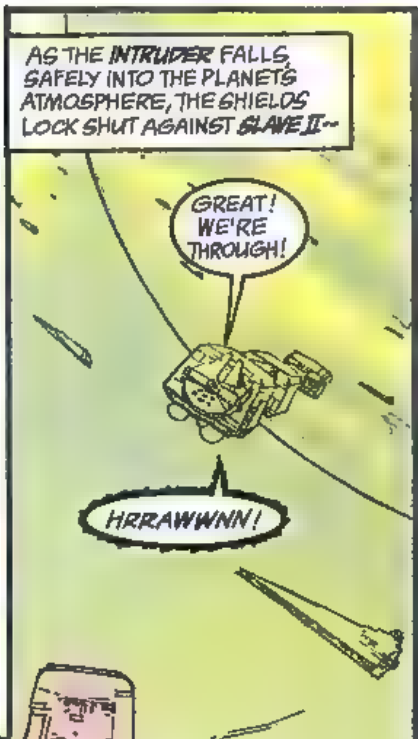




BUT SECURITY IS VERY TIGHT ON THE  
EMPEROR'S NEW THRONEWORLD...  
BOUNTY HUNTERS ARE NOT WANTED  
ON BYSS!

SIR...I HAVE AN AUTHORIZED  
DOCKING CODE. BUT THERE'S A  
SMALLER SHIP RIGHT BEHIND,  
TRYING TO SNEAK PAST THE  
SHIELDS.

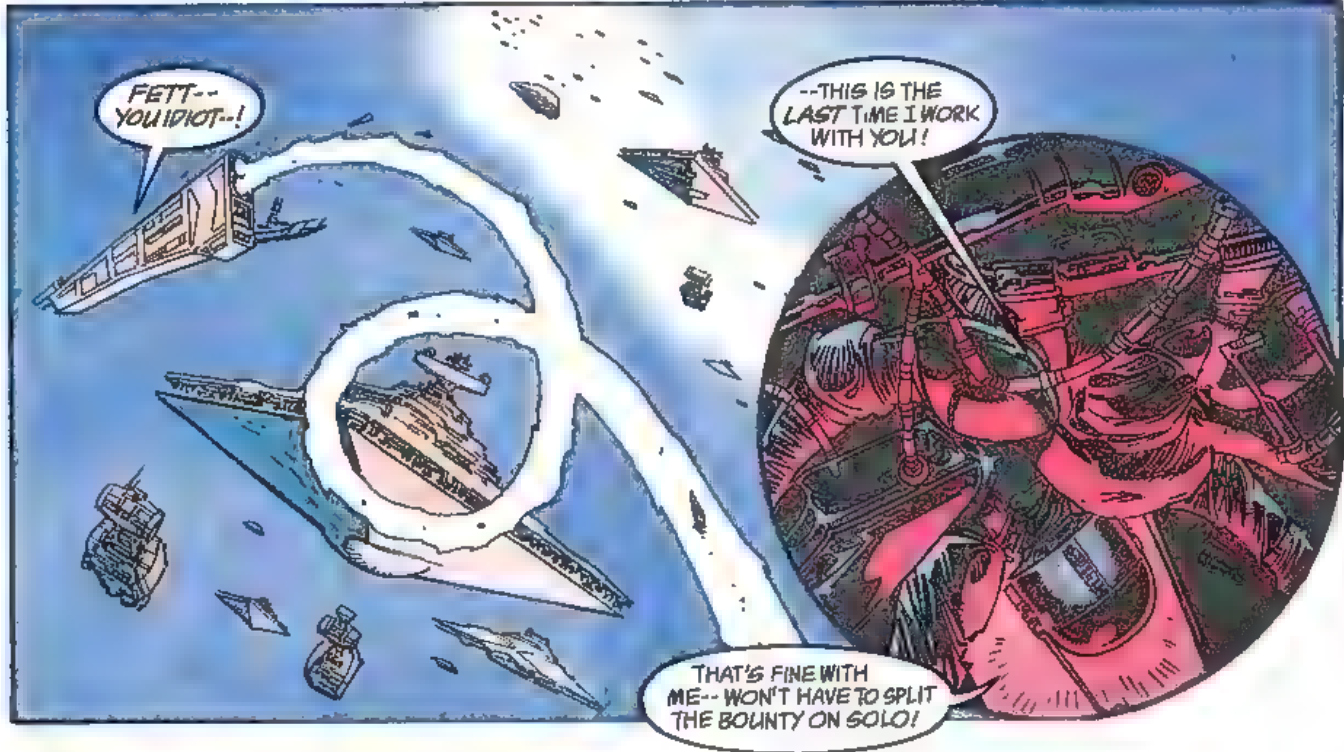
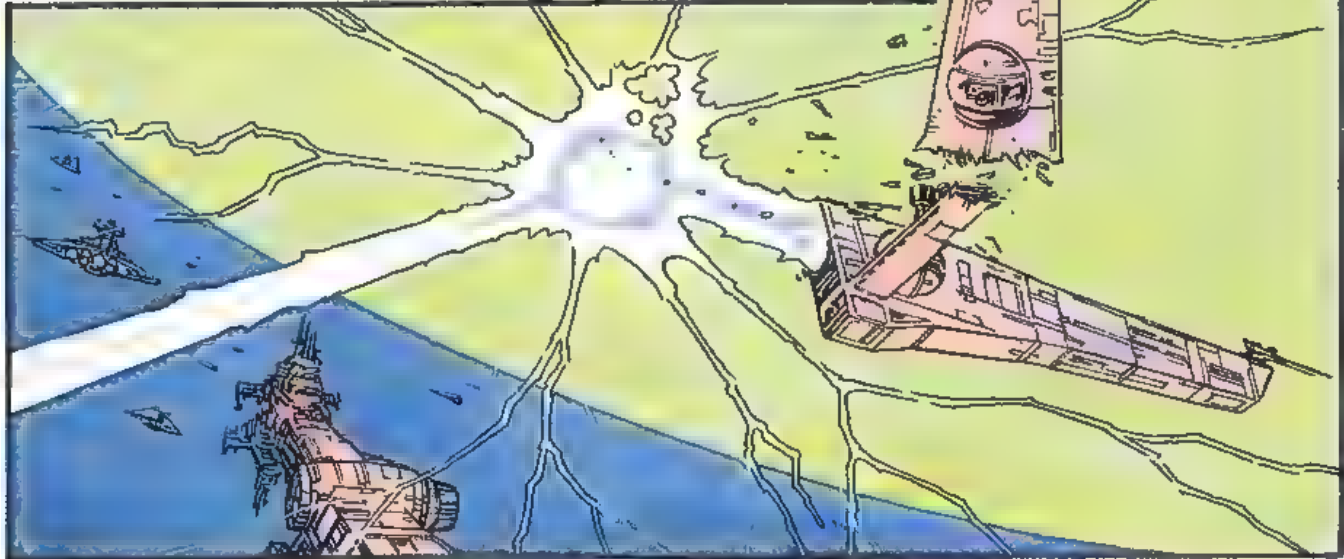
CUT HIM  
OFF! CLOSE THE  
SHIELDS!



AS THE INTRUDER FALLS  
SAFELY INTO THE PLANET'S  
ATMOSPHERE, THE SHIELDS  
LOCK SHUT AGAINST SLAVE II--

GREAT!  
WE'RE  
THROUGH!

HRRAWNN!

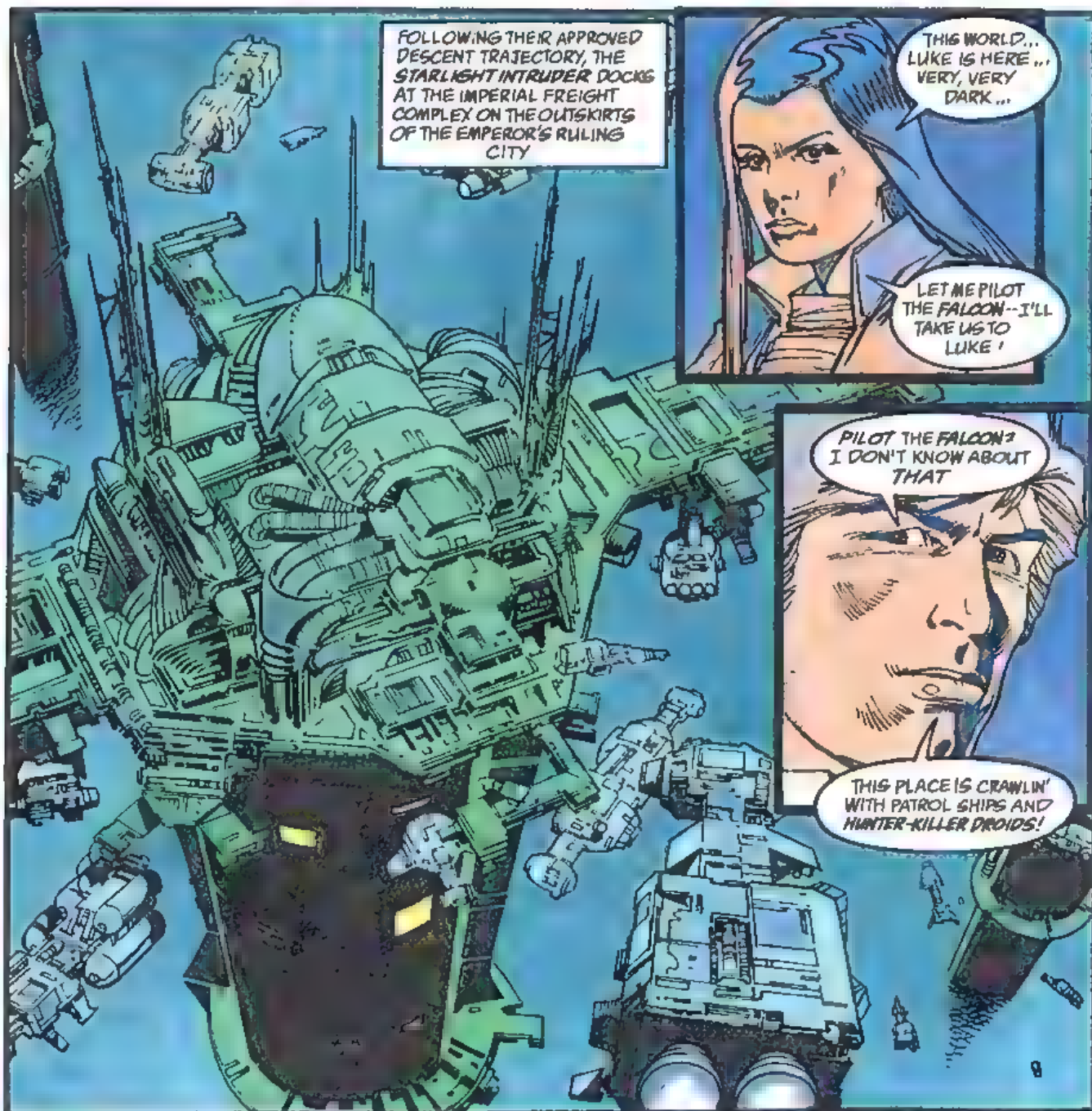


FETT--  
YOU IDIOT--!

--THIS IS THE  
LAST TIME I WORK  
WITH YOU!

THAT'S FINE WITH  
ME-- WON'T HAVE TO SPLIT  
THE BOUNTY ON SOLO!





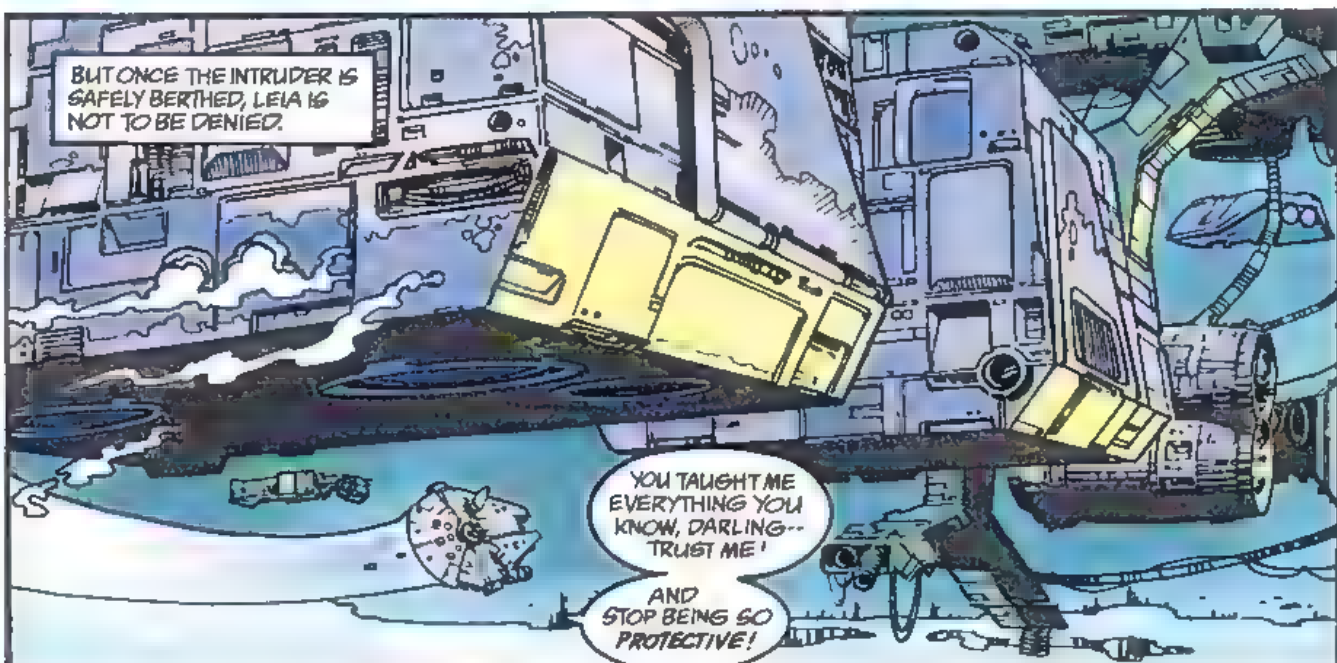
FOLLOWING THEIR APPROVED DESCENT TRAJECTORY, THE STARLIGHT INTRUDER DOCKS AT THE IMPERIAL FREIGHT COMPLEX ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE EMPEROR'S RULING CITY

THIS WORLD... LUKE IS HERE... VERY, VERY DARK...

LET ME PILOT THE FALCON--I'LL TAKE US TO LUKE!

PILOT THE FALCON? I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT

THIS PLACE IS CRAWLIN' WITH PATROL SHIPS AND HUNTER-KILLER DROIDS!



BUT ONCE THE INTRUDER IS SAFELY BERTHED, LEIA IS NOT TO BE DENIED.

YOU TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW, DARLING-- TRUST ME!

AND STOP BEING SO PROTECTIVE!



IGNORING HER HUSBAND'S PROTESTS, LEIA USES HER JEDI ABILITIES TO GUIDE THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON** UNERRINGLY ACROSS THE MAZELIKE CITY--

YOU SEE THAT TOWER? THAT'S WHERE LUKE IS. WE'LL LAND IN THAT BIG HANGAR ON TOP!

RIGHT--IF WE DON'T GET VAPORIZED TO GLOWING FRAGMENTS FIRST!

SECURITY COMMAND, THIS IS **PATROL XLS...** WE ARE IN PURSUIT OF UNREGISTERED TRAFFIC IN SECURITY ZONE ONE.

THE FORCE WILL GET US THROUGH, HAN...

NNRAWH!

I KNOW, CHEWIE... BE A POLITE WOOKIEE AND COOL IT. I GOT A HUNCH WE'RE GONNA NEED THE FORCE TO GET US WHERE WE'RE GOIN'!

CONCENTRATING HER JEDI ATTENTION ON THEIR PURSUERS, LEIA FINDS THE MIND OF THE PATROL SHIP'S GUNNER.

SIR... THEY MUST BE USING A CLOAKING DEVICE. WE'VE LOST VISUAL SIGHTING, AND THE SCANNERS CAN'T FIND THEM EITHER.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? THAT SHIP IS RIGHT THERE ON THE TARGETING SCREENS! DESTROY IT!

SORRY, SIR... THE TARGETING COMPUTER IS NEVER WRONG, SIR. MAYBE THEY DROPPED BEHIND US, SIR!

YOU FOOL! NOW WE'VE MISSED OUR CHANCE!

THAT TRAMP FREIGHTER IS IN VIOLATION OF THE EMPEROR'S PERSONAL SECURITY ZONE-- WE'LL BOTH BE EXECUTED FOR THIS!



THE SAME JEDI COURAGE THAT LED LUKE SKYWALKER TO SURRENDER TO HIS FATHER ON THE ENDOR MOON BRINGS LEIA INTO THE MOUTH OF THE BEAST THAT INTENDS TO **SNUFF OUT** THE LAST LIGHT OF THE JEDI!...

PERMIT THEM TO LAND--

--PREPARE TO TAKE THE PRISONERS TO LORD SKYWALKER.

THANKS FOR LETTING ME ADD MY SPECIAL TOUCH TO YOUR PLAN, DEAR.

I HOPE IT WORKS!

GNRAWWN!

WE STILL HAVE TWO LIFE-FORM READINGS ON BOARD, SIR--HUMANOID.

CLOSE THE BAY DOORS. WE'LL GO IN AND TAKE THEM OUT...DEAD IF WE HAVE TO!

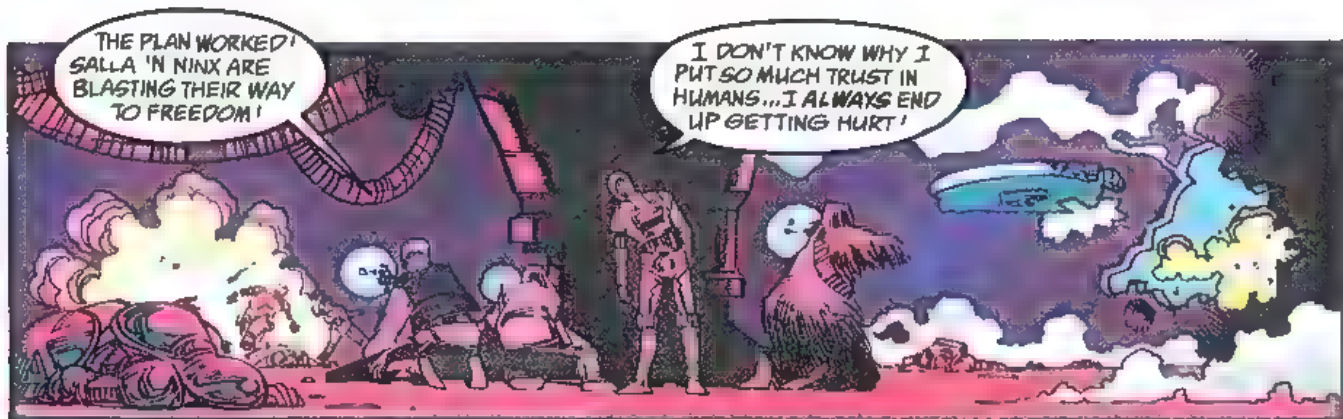
AS THE STORMTROOPERS PREPARE TO BOARD, THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON** TILTS OFF HER LANDING GEAR AND UNLEASHES ROTATING BLASTER CANNONS!

GOOD WORK, SALLA!

EVERYBODY HIT THE DECK!

WHAT ABOUT ME? I'M COMPLETELY DEFENSELESS!





THE PLAN WORKED!  
SALLA 'N NINX ARE  
BLASTING THEIR WAY  
TO FREEDOM!

I DON'T KNOW WHY I  
PUT SO MUCH TRUST IN  
HUMANS...I ALWAYS END  
UP GETTING HURT!



IF SALLA'S LUCKY,  
SHE'LL FIND A HOLE TO  
HIDE THE FALCON UNTIL  
WE NEED IT--

RIGHT...LISTEN,  
HAN, LUKE'S NOT FAR  
ALL WE HAVE TO DO  
NOW IS--



L-LUKE!

LEIA YOU  
SHOULD NOT  
HAVE COME  
HERE.

IT WILL  
NOT GO  
WELL.

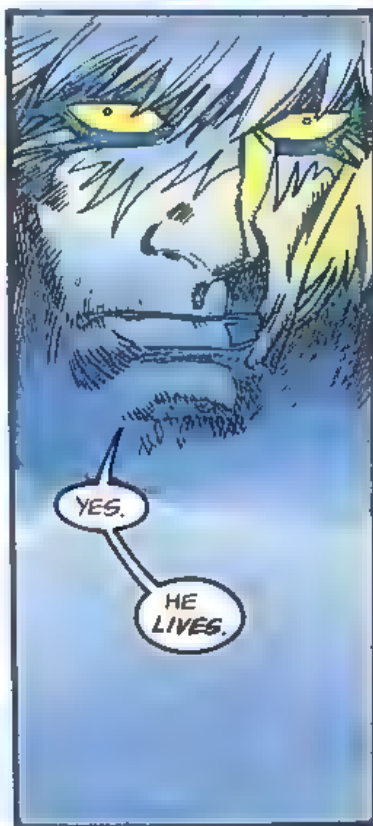


MY MASTER  
WISHES TO SPEAK  
WITH YOU.

MY SENTINELS  
WILL ESCORT YOU TO  
THE EMPEROR'S  
PRESENCE.

THE EMPEROR?

WHAT  
DO YOU  
MEAN?



YES.

HE  
LIVES.





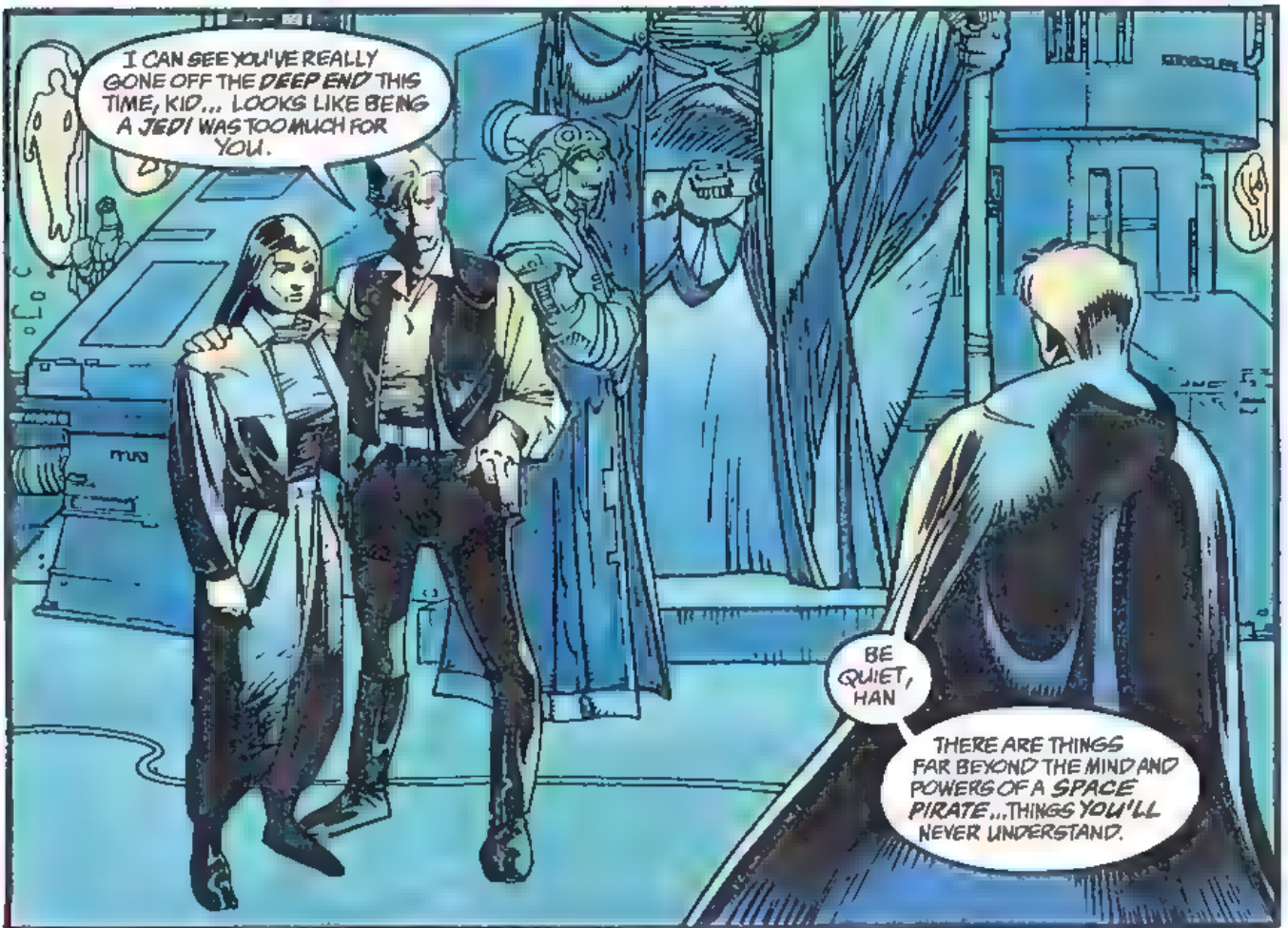
ESCORTED BY THE FORMIDABLE SENTINELS, LEIA, HAN, CHEWBACCA, AND THREEPIO ARE TAKEN TO THE SUBTERRANEAN LEVELS OF THE TOWER...TO THE EMPEROR'S CLONE LABORATORIES.

OH, ARTOO! LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO YOU! I WARNED YOU THERE WAS GOING TO BE TROUBLE!

BWEEET?

LEIA HAN. IT WAS VERY FOOLISH FOR YOU TO COME HERE.

I TOLD YOU THAT MY DESTINY IS NOT YOURS.

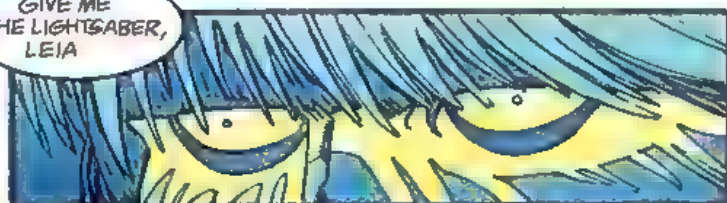
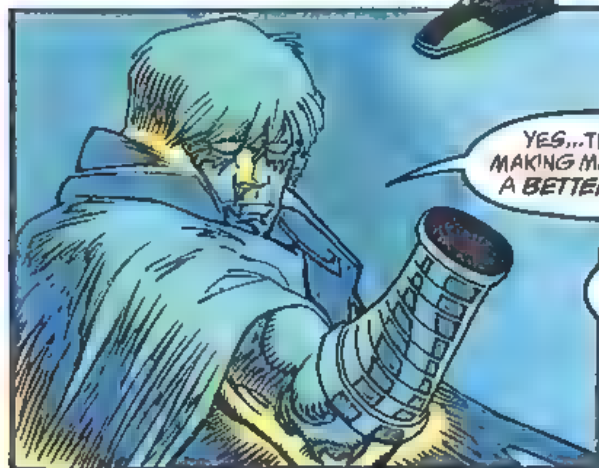


I CAN SEE YOU'VE REALLY GONE OFF THE DEEP END THIS TIME, KID... LOOKS LIKE BEING A JEDI WAS TOO MUCH FOR YOU.

BE QUIET, HAN

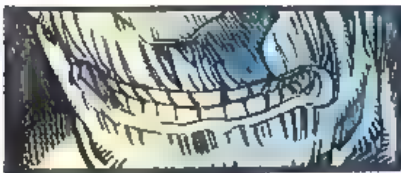
THERE ARE THINGS FAR BEYOND THE MIND AND POWERS OF A SPACE PIRATE...THINGS YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND.





SHRUMMMMN









NOW-- WE'RE LEAVING.  
AND WE'RE TAKING LUKE  
WITH US.



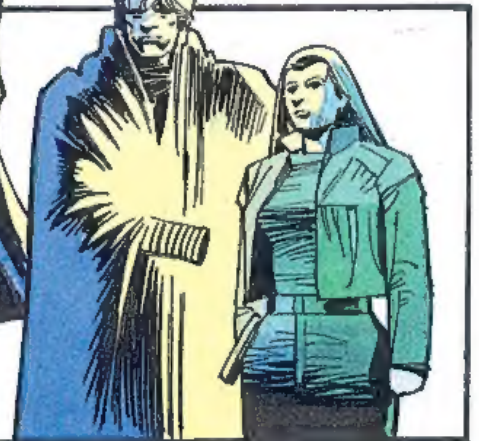
BRAVE  
LITTLE  
JEDI!

BUT REALLY, SUCH AN  
OLD LIGHTSABER IS NOT A  
WORTHY WEAPON FOR YOU!



LOOK AT YOU...  
BROTHER AND SISTER...  
JEDI. THE LAST OF  
YOUR KIND.

AND I  
HAVE YOU  
BOTH!



THIS ONE...MY DEAR  
APPRENTICE... SO STRONG  
IN THE FORCE...

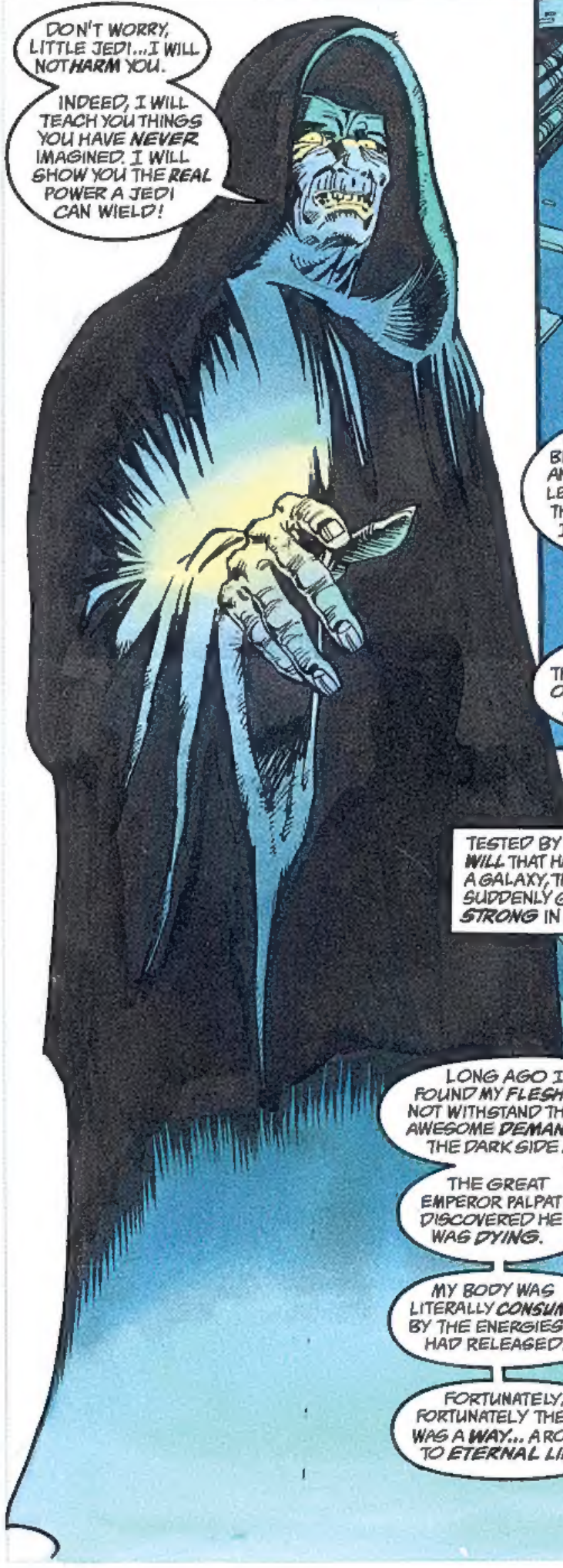
HE HAS  
LEARNED  
HIS LESSONS  
WELL.



AND THE SISTER...  
SO VULNERABLE... SO  
INEXPERIENCED...


AND YET IT  
IS SHE WHO HOLDS  
THE KEY TO THE  
FUTURE!





DON'T WORRY,  
LITTLE JEDI!...I WILL  
NOT HARM YOU.

INDEED, I WILL  
TEACH YOU THINGS  
YOU HAVE NEVER  
IMAGINED. I WILL  
SHOW YOU THE REAL  
POWER A JEDI  
CAN WIELD!



TESTED BY THE DARK  
WILL THAT HAS ENSLAVED  
A GALAXY, THE FORCE  
SUDDENLY GROWS  
STRONG IN LEIA...



LONG AGO I  
FOUND MY FLESH COULD  
NOT WITHSTAND THE  
AWESOME DEMANDS OF  
THE DARK SIDE...

THE GREAT  
EMPEROR PALPATINE  
DISCOVERED HE  
WAS DYING.

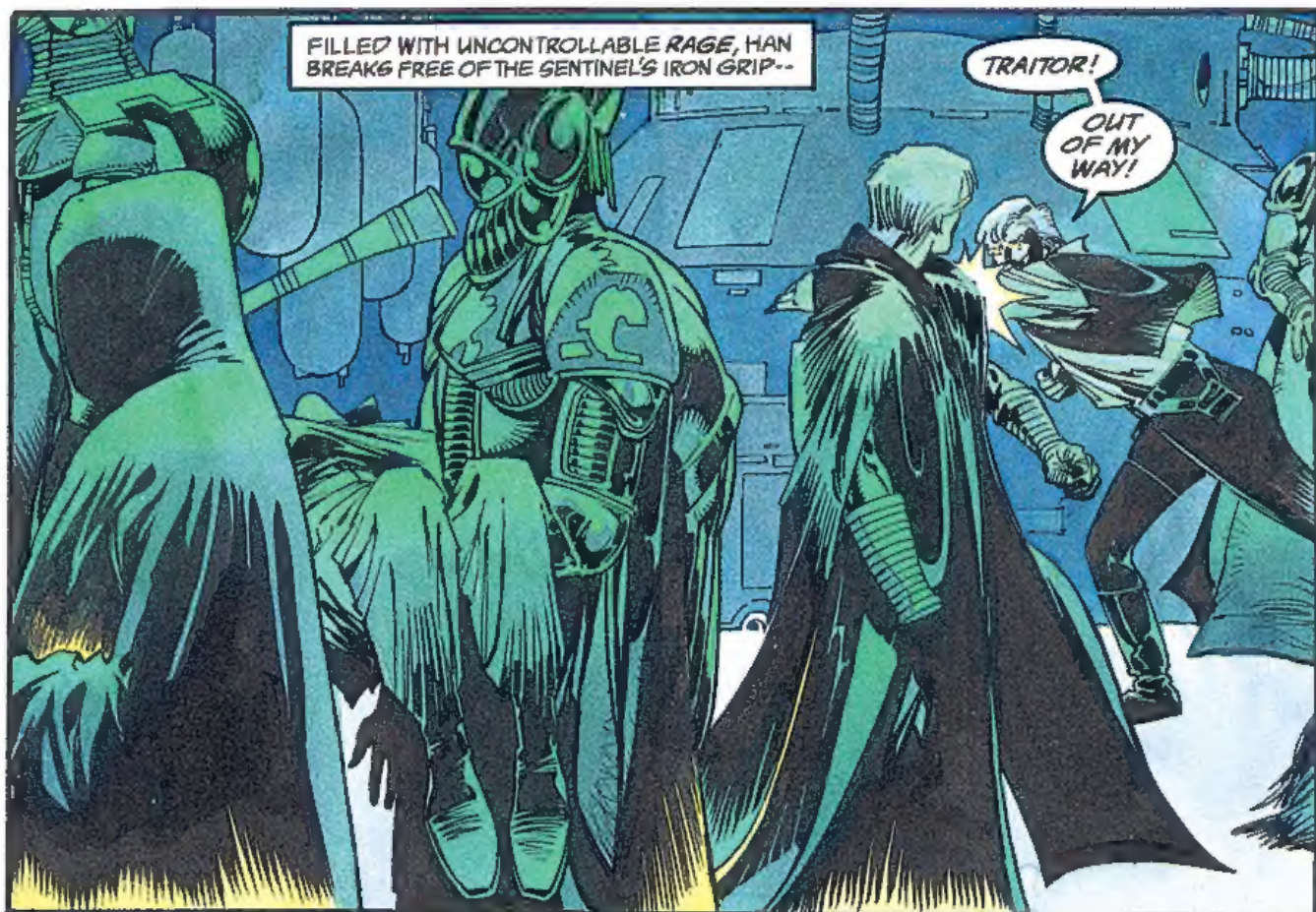
MY BODY WAS  
LITERALLY CONSUMED  
BY THE ENERGIES I  
HAD RELEASED...

FORTUNATELY...  
FORTUNATELY THERE  
WAS A WAY... A ROAD  
TO ETERNAL LIFE--









FILLED WITH UNCONTROLLABLE RAGE, HAN BREAKS FREE OF THE SENTINEL'S IRON GRIP--

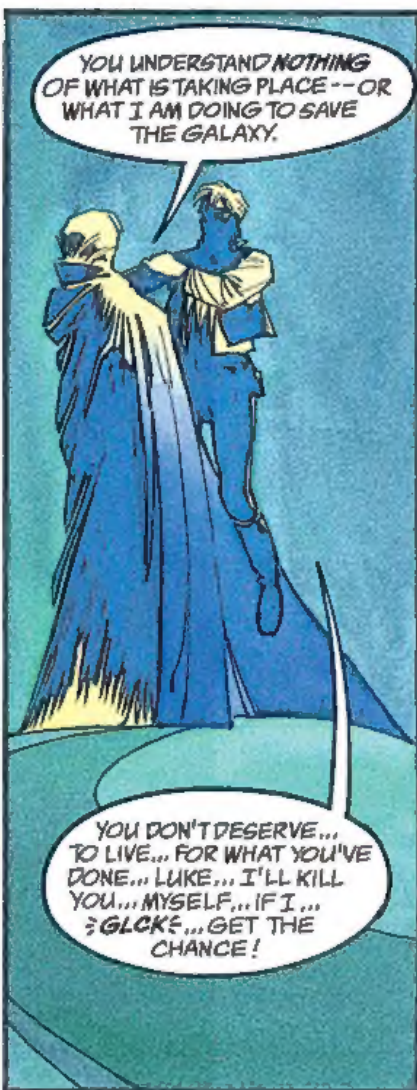
TRAITOR!  
OUT OF MY WAY!



I STRONGLY SUGGEST YOU REFRAIN FROM VIOLENCE, HAN... FOR LEIA'S SAKE.

GLAACK...

YOU'VE BECOME... JUST LIKE HIM... HAVEN'T YOU... JUST LIKE VADER-- OR WORSE.



YOU UNDERSTAND NOTHING OF WHAT IS TAKING PLACE-- OR WHAT I AM DOING TO SAVE THE GALAXY.

YOU DON'T DESERVE... TO LIVE... FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE... LUKE... I'LL KILL YOU... MYSELF... IF I... GLUCK... GET THE CHANCE!



THAT MAY BE TRUE, HAN. I MAY HAVE TO DIE.

BUT I ASSURE YOU, IT WON'T BE YOU WHO DOES THE DEED.